

What is claimed is

CLAIMS:

1. A network element for use in a communication network, said network element being arranged between a mobile station and an end element, wherein connections are established between said mobile station and said end element via said network element, said network element comprising means for determining if the connection between said end element and said mobile station is to be released.

2. A network element as claimed in claim 1, wherein said network element is arranged to release said connection when the determining means determines that the connection is to be released.

3. A network element is claimed in claim 2, wherein said network element is arranged to release the connection between the network element and said mobile station.

4. A network element as claimed in claim 2 or 3, wherein said network element is arranged to send a message to the end element indicating that said connection has been released.

5. A network element as claimed in claim 1, wherein said network element is arranged to send a request for the connection to be released to said end element.

6. A network element as claimed in claim 5, wherein the end element sends a connection release command to said network element in response to the release request received by said network element, said network element controlling the release of said connection.

7. A network element as claimed in claim 6, wherein said network element is arranged to send a release request to said mobile station in response to the release command received from said end element.

8. A network element as claimed in claim 7, wherein said network element is arranged to send a message to said end element advising that the connection has been released.

9. A network element as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said determining means determines that the connection is to be released if the connection has not been used for a predetermined time.

10. A network element as claimed in claim 9, wherein the predetermined time depends on the type of traffic for which the connection is intended.

11. A network element as claimed in claim 9, wherein the predetermined time depends on the quality of service profile of the traffic for which the connection is intended.

12. A network element as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said determining means is arranged to determine if the connection is to be released based on the state of the mobile station.

13. A network element as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said determining means is arranged to determine if the connection should be released based on the movement of the mobile station.

14. A network element as claimed in claim 13, wherein the amount of updating information received in a given time from the mobile station is used as a measure of the movement of the mobile station.

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15. A network element as claimed in claim 14, wherein said updating information comprises URA updates.

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16. A network element as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said determining means is arranged to determine if the connection should be released based on the location of said mobile station.

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17. A network element as claimed in claim 16, wherein said determining means determines that the connection should be released if the mobile station is associated with a different network element.

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18. A network element as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said network element is a radio network controller.

19. A network comprising a network element as claimed in any preceding claim, a mobile station and an end element.

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20. A network as claimed in claims 19 or 20, wherein said end element is a SGSN.

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21. A network as claimed in claims 19, 20 or 21 wherein said network operates in accordance with the UMTS Standard.

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